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THE ELECTRONIC INTIFADA

"Shoot at everything": How Israeli pilots killed their own civilians

Ali Abunimah (/web/20240401050850/https://electronicintifada.net/people/ali-abunimah)
11 November 2023

Over the last few days, this video clip has gone absolutely viral. Syrian Girl, a user on X (formerly Twitter), shared it with the compelling caption, "BREAKING: Israel admits Apache helicopters fired on their own civilians running from the Supernova music festival."

> BREAKING🚨: Israel admits apache helicopters fired on their own civilians running from the Supernova music festival.
>
> "The pilots realised that there was tremendous difficulty in distinguishing within the occupied outposts and settlements who was a terrorist and who was a... pic.twitter.com/wv6wR710qO (https://web.archive.org/web/20240401050850/https://t.co/wv6wR710qO)
>
> — Syrian Girl SY🎗 (@Partisangirl) November 9, 2023 (https://web.archive.org/web/20240401050850/https://twitter.com/Partisangirl/status/1722527493780021654?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw)

Syrian Girl also shared this passage from an article in *Yedioth Ahronoth*, a major Israeli newspaper, that has been quoted in several other publications:

"The pilots realized that there was tremendous difficulty in distinguishing within the occupied outposts and settlements who was a terrorist and who was a soldier or civilian ... The rate of fire against the thousands of terrorists was tremendous at first, and only at a certain point, did the pilots begin to slow down the attacks and carefully select the targets."

Since Syrian Girl posted the tweet on 9 November, the embedded video has been viewed almost 26 million times. The tweet itself has been reposted or liked almost a quarter of a million times.

Syrian Girl's tweet has given many the impression that this type of footage has just emerged.

In fact the Israeli army published similar footage in the middle of October, though its significance may have escaped many at the time. And while Syrian Girl only posted a 14-second clip, the video released by the Israeli military is almost three minutes long.

As *The Times of Israel* reported on 15 October, the army published video claiming (https://web.archive.org/web/20240401050850/https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/idf-publishes-footage-of-helicopter-gunships-hitting-hamas-terrorists/) it shows "helicopter gunships striking Hamas terrorists as they streamed across the breached border from Gaza" on 7 October.

The army video was also published by other (https://web.archive.org/web/20240401050850/https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GkNYB0DayK0) major media outlets at the time.

It's not clear whether the clip posted by Syrian Girl is sourced from the same longer video released by the Israeli army.

But the army video almost certainly does show Israeli helicopter pilots shooting at Israeli civilians, and possibly soldiers as well.

> New footage published by the military shows IAF combat helicopters striking and shooting at Palestinian terrorists infiltrating into Israel on the morning of October 7 pic.twitter.com/hnP1s6GGGa (https://web.archive.org/web/20240401050850/https://t.co/hnP1s6GGGa)
>
> — Emanuel (Mannie) Fabian (@manniefabian) October 15, 2023 (https://web.archive.org/web/20240401050850/https://twitter.com/manniefabian/status/1713555453840400672?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw)

"Shoot at everything"

The quote in Syrian Girl's tweet comes from an article published on 15 October in Hebrew by Yoav Zitun, military correspondent for *Ynet*, the online outlet affiliated with *Yedioth Ahronoth*.

The full article translated into English appears below. Zitun's article also includes the video released by the Israeli military – and that is the video at the top of this article.

Zitun does offer clear evidence that the Israeli military fired indiscriminately, targeting Palestinian fighters and Israeli civilians alike.

He cites the startling case of one Lieutenant Colonel A., the commander of Squadron 190 who around mid-morning of 7 October, "instructed the other fighters in the air to shoot at *everything they see in the area of the fence*, and at a certain point also attacked an IDF [Israeli army] station with trapped soldiers in order to help the fighters of Navy commando Unit 13 attack it and liberate it."

But Zitun's account indicates that this was not isolated.

"The air force has begun to summarize the events of the surprise attack that began the war in Gaza, and it emerges that there was a fog of war during the first hours of Black Saturday, not only for the fighters on the ground, but also for the air teams that were summoned to the skies of the western Negev," Zitun's article begins.

"Difficult to distinguish" between fighters and civilians

"After the pilots realized that inside the army stations and the settlements that were conquered, it was very difficult to distinguish between terrorists and [Israeli] soldiers or civilians, the decision was made that the first objective of the fighter helicopters and the armed Zik [Elbit Hermes 450] drones is to stop the deluge of terrorists and the murderous masses that flowed into Israeli territory through the holes in the fence," Zitun writes.

Zitun then adds: "28 fighter helicopters shot over the course of the day all of the ammunition in their bellies, in renewed runs to rearm. We are talking about hundreds of 30 millimeter cannon mortars (each mortar is like a hand grenade) and Hellfire missiles," he adds.

"The frequency of fire at the thousands of terrorists was enormous at the start, and *only at a certain point* did the pilots begin to slow their attacks and carefully choose the targets."

At least one Israeli survivor has said (https://web.archive.org/web/20240401050850/https://www.jta.org/2023/10/16/israel/i-decided-to-play-dead-my-son-is-still-missing-a-survivors-account-from-kibbutz-nir-oz) that another Israeli woman was killed when a helicopter fired on the vehicle she was in with Palestinians and other Israelis.

> Another Israeli survivor account in which the only reported shooting and killing of Israeli civilians appears to have been done by the "IDF," from a helicopter https://t.co/xVJ7h4iA3i (https://web.archive.org/web/20240401050850/https://t.co/xVJ7h4iA3i) pic.twitter.com/3gmHNw0k2P (https://web.archive.org/web/20240401050850/https://t.co/3gmHNw0k2P)
>
> — Ali Abunimah is now on bluesky (@AliAbunimah) October 24, 2023 (https://web.archive.org/web/20240401050850/https://twitter.com/AliAbunimah/status/1716767834758349048?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw)

Citing the Israeli military's preliminary investigations, Zitun describes an utterly chaotic situation: "The air activity on the first day was not organized, and in the skies pilots had to improvise solutions to the complicated and unprecedented situation: much of the firing and targeting directions received from forces battling on the ground reached the pilots via phone calls or images sent by WhatsApp."

The most bizarre element of the account in Zitun's article is the claim that "Hamas made it more difficult for helicopter pilots and the drone operators" by using a ruse.

According to the Israeli military investigation, Zitun says, the Hamas fighters had been ordered "to march slowly towards the settlements and army stations, and inside them, and not to run under any circumstances, to make the pilots think they are Israelis."

It is not explained why anyone would think Israelis would not run amid such a violent and chaotic situation, but according to Zitun, the army concluded that "the deception worked for a little while, until the Apache pilots understood they needed to sidestep their restrictions."

He also says that some pilots started "on their own initiative to spray the terrorists with cannons without permission from their superiors."

Two elements stand out here: By the military's own admission, Israeli pilots could not distinguish clearly between Palestinian combatants and Israeli civilians but decided to open fire with massive amounts of weaponry anyway.

300 "targets"

Perhaps in order to preempt the obvious conclusion that Israel killed many of its own people, Zitun inserts this strange sentence: "Reflecting on the enormous number of murdered and kidnapped, the air force is convinced that without the fire support and many attacks carried out by the IDF fighter helicopter pilots on that day, the carnage would have been much greater."

According to the air force, Zitun writes, "in the first four hours from the start of the battles, helicopters and fighter craft attacked about 300 targets, most in Israeli territory."

Israel pilots fired at *hundreds* of targets on their own territory without even having a clear picture of who or what they were shooting at.

With that admission, it would be all but impossible for the Israeli military not to have killed large numbers of its own people.

Blasting away at civilian cars

In light of Zitun's report, the video released by the Israeli military last month may show much more than Israeli officials are willing to admit.

The video released by the Israeli army shows the helicopters and perhaps drones firing away at civilian cars the identity of whose occupants cannot be determined. They may well have been Israeli

civilians trying to flee the area. At one point, a car comes under fire and people pour out only to be machine-gunned by the Israeli aircraft.

It also appears far more likely that the graphic images of burned bodies distributed by Israel and its propagandists – supposed evidence of Hamas atrocities – were caused by helicopters firing heavy caliber shells or Hellfire missiles, rather than the light weapons that the Palestinian fighters were generally seen carrying.

> להפיץ, שכל העולם יראה את הזוועה pic.twitter.com/Y2StDzd15V (https://web.archive.org/web/20240401050850/https://t.co/Y2StDzd15V)
>
> — Mendy Yahav (@MendyYahav) October 11, 2023 (https://web.archive.org/web/20240401050850/https://twitter.com/MendyYahav/status/1712177181877522493?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw)

> you notice that people stopped trotting out the charred corpse pictures once the first survivor revealed that the IDF fired on everyone in a panicked mania https://t.co/TyHbhWe7Hx (https://web.archive.org/web/20240401050850/https://t.co/TyHbhWe7Hx)
>
> — Lead Actor from Pixar's Sodas (@ByYourLogic) November 10, 2023 (https://web.archive.org/web/20240401050850/https://twitter.com/ByYourLogic/status/1722901885710135482?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw)

Accumulating evidence

Over the last month, compelling testimonies and other evidence have appeared in Israeli media indicating that a large though undetermined number of Israelis were killed on and after 7 October by Israeli forces.

These accounts have been reported in English primarily by independent media, including The Electronic Intifada (https://web.archive.org/web/20240401050850/https://electronicintifada.net/content/israeli-forces-shot-their-own-civilians-kibbutz-survivor-says/38861), *Mondoweiss* (https://web.archive.org/web/20240401050850/https://mondoweiss.net/2023/10/a-growing-number-of-reports-indicate-israeli-forces-responsible-for-israeli-civilian-and-military-deaths-following-october-7-attack/) and *The Grayzone* (https://web.archive.org/web/20240401050850/https://thegrayzone.com/2023/10/27/israels-military-shelled-burning-tanks-helicopters/).

One of the first testimonies was from Yasmin Porat, who survived the violence at Kibbutz Be'eri.

She told Israeli state radio (https://web.archive.org/web/20240401050850/https://electronicintifada.net/content/israeli-forces-shot-their-own-civilians-kibbutz-survivor-says/38861) that Palestinian fighters treated her and the other Israelis they were holding "humanely." Israeli security forces then showed up and started a gunfight.

Porat said that the heavy fire from the Israeli side killed almost all the civilians, along with many of the Palestinian fighters.

> Must watch: Most damning evidence Israel killed its own soldiers and settlers (along with Hamas captors) deliberately and systematically to prevent them from being captured.
>
> Translated by the Electronic Intifada @intifada (https://web.archive.org/web/20240401050850/https://twitter.com/intifada?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw)
>
> pic.twitter.com/vJEei1uaKw (https://web.archive.org/web/20240401050850/https://t.co/vJEei1uaKw)
>
> — Refaat in Gaza ᴘꜱ (@itranslate123) November 9, 2023 (https://web.archive.org/web/20240401050850/https://twitter.com/itranslate123/status/1722638695814107587?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw)
>
> ⚡IT'S TIME TO BREAK THIS NARRATIVE ONCE AND FOR ALL ⚡NEW VIDEO ⚡
>
> "Before they launch missiles, they launch propaganda campaigns. Before they roll out tanks, they roll out narratives."
>
> - Caitlin Johnstone pic.twitter.com/TiT6FHBBhf (https://web.archive.org/web/20240401050850/https://t.co/TiT6FHBBhf)
>
> — Propaganda and co (@propandco) October 28, 2023 (https://web.archive.org/web/20240401050850/https://twitter.com/propandco/status/1718092723750899809?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw)

Need for investigation

Mainstream media and Western governments have ignored the story, preferring to stick to Israel's lurid, unsubstantiated and often outright false atrocity tales – such as the infamous claim (https://web.archive.org/web/20240401050850/https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/ali-abunimah/biden-lied-about-seeing-photos-beheaded-israeli-children) that Hamas fighters beheaded dozens of Jewish babies.

While sometimes unjustly questioning well-documented Palestinian death tolls, media and governments have accepted without question Israel's claim that 1,400 people were killed on or just after 7 October.

On Friday, Israel revised that death toll (https://web.archive.org/web/20240401050850/https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/israel-revises-death-toll-oct-7-hamas-attack-around-1200-2023-11-10/#:~:text=JERUSALEM%2C%20Nov%2010%20(Reuters),previous%20government%20estimate%20of%201%2C400.) down to 1,200.

While there can be no doubt given the evidence and testimonies available so far that Israel killed some of its own people on and after 7 October, knowing exactly how many would require an independent investigation – something Israel will almost certainly not allow.

But a good start would be for mainstream media – and its various investigative powerhouses – to do their own examinations and test Israel's often outlandish claims against the evidence.

As I noted in a recent Electronic Intifada livestream, they are failing miserably to do that:

> Israel never substantiated claims it made about beheaded babies and systemic mass executions that "defined the public mood" that led to its ongoing genocide in Gaza, says @AliAbunimah (https://web.archive.org/web/20240401050850/https://twitter.com/AliAbunimah?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw).
>
> But "Nobody in the Western media or Western politicians is going back to Netanyahu and saying:... pic.twitter.com/lfOgdrpVXU (https://web.archive.org/web/20240401050850/https://t.co/lfOgdrpVXU)
>
> — Electronic Intifada (@intifada) November 8, 2023 (https://web.archive.org/web/20240401050850/https://twitter.com/intifada/status/1722064045795049928?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw)

Translation of Ynet article

Translation for The Electronic Intifada by David Sheen.

SOURCE: *Ynet*

LINK: https://www.ynet.co.il/news/article/b111niukzt (https://web.archive.org/web/20240401050850/https://www.ynet.co.il/news/article/b111niukzt)

HEADLINE: **Hamas tricked Israeli helicopters, and pilots over WhatsApp | The Air Force on Day 1**

SUBHEAD: The first helicopters were summoned from the north ironically, and reached the Gaza envelope about an hour after the battles began. The terrorists were instructed not to run so that from the air they will be thought of as Israelis. The pilots fired at those who crossed the fence, and even right inside the settlements. The pilots received information from the ground to their mobile phones. In four hours 300 targets were attacked | The events of Black Saturday [2023-10-7].

BYLINE: Yoav Zitun

DATELINE: 15 October 2023

BODY: The air force has begun to summarize the events of the surprise attack that began the war in Gaza, and it emerges that there was a fog of war during the first hours of the Black Saturday, not

only for the fighters on the ground, but also for the air teams that were summoned to the skies of the western Negev.

The first pair of fighter helicopters that was immediately available to the Gaza Division reached the Gaza envelope about an hour or more after the start of events, around 7:30 to 8:00, from Ramat David base in the north [SW Galilee]. This though the Apache helicopters' parent squadrons are at the Ramon base, which is closer to the Gaza Strip. At the Ramon base they quickly understood that something odd is developing and they got a fighter helicopter in the air with the Commander of the 190 Squadron Lt. Col. A himself, arriving at the Gaza envelope at 8:32.

After the pilots realized that inside the army stations and the settlements that were conquered, it was very difficult to distinguish between terrorists and [Israeli] soldiers or civilians, the decision was made that the first objective of the fighter helicopters and the armed Zik [Elbit Hermes 450] drones is to stop the deluge of terrorists and the murderous masses that flowed into Israeli territory through the holes in the fence. Twenty-eight fighter helicopters shot over the course of the day all of the ammunition in their bellies, in renewed runs to rearm. We are talking about hundreds of 30 millimeter cannon mortars (each mortar is like a hand grenade) and Hellfire missiles. The frequency of fire at the thousands of terrorists was enormous at the start, and only at a certain point did the pilots begin to slow their attacks and carefully choose the targets.

It turns out that the Hamas made it difficult for helicopter pilots and the drone operators: the investigation revealed that the invading forces were asked in their final briefings to march slowly towards the settlements and army stations, and inside them, and not to run under any circumstance, to make the pilots think they are Israelis. The deception worked for a considerable while, until the Apache pilots understood they needed to sidestep their restrictions. Only around 9:00 did some start on their own initiative to spray the terrorists with cannons, without permission from their superiors.

The air activity on the first day was not organized, and in the skies pilots had to improvise solutions to the complicated and unprecedented situation: much of the firing and targeting directions received from forces battling on the ground reached the pilots via phone calls or images sent by WhatsApp. Reflecting on the enormous number of murdered and kidnapped, the Air Force is convinced that without the fire support and many attacks carried out by the IDF fighter helicopter pilots on that day, the carnage would have been much greater.

Something else that helped the Air Force commanders realize the severity of the event in its early hours occurred around 10:00 AM, when the commander of Squadron 190 Lt. Col. A. got out of his helicopter at Ramon [Air Base] to rearm and refuel. He extracted the full video that the helicopter camera documented and quickly broadcast it to the IDF HQ at the Kirya [in Tel Aviv]. In less than 20 minutes he was in the air again, and with the information extracted, he instructed the other fighters in the air to shoot at everything they see in the area of the fence, and at a certain point also attacked an IDF station with trapped soldiers in order to help the fighters of Navy commando unit 13 attack it and liberate it.

In one instance, removing his own self-imposed restrictions, he shot a distance of only twenty meters from one of the houses on the kibbutz in order to cover the Deputy Commander of Division 80 that was called in from the Sinai sector and killed four terrorists in a difficult battle. According to

the Air Force, in the first four hours from the start of the battles, helicopters and fighter craft attacked about 300 targets, most in Israeli territory.

On the ninth day of the war (Sunday) the Air Force is embedded in the effort to eliminate the leaders of Hamas, while preparing for its massive contribution in advance of a ground invasion. The Air Force has not related to the dilemma created by attacking targets in which Hamas leaders like Muhammad Deif and Yahya Sinwar are hiding next to Israeli hostages used as human shields.

The Air Force is working to create a new barrier between Israel and the Gaza Strip up to three kilometers wide, and to encourage the Gazans to go southward in advance of the heavy bombardment that will rain down on Gaza City and the northern towns. The phrase currently driving the Air Force is "the destruction of military capabilities, movements and authorities of the terrorist groups in the Gaza Strip that threaten Israel." The pilots were instructed to act calmly and professionally, with organized intelligence and operational logic behind every one of the thousands of attacks carried out up to now.

Currently the air effort is invested in Gaza, but at heightened readiness for days of battle that is already unfolding in the north. The IDF explains that the Air Force is trained and equipped to deal with two fronts simultaneously, but its preference is to focus on one main theater. Thus for example the Air Force is not automatically attacking every Hezbollah anti-aircraft missile launcher that shoots a rocket at Israeli drones.

At the same time, the IDF has identified for some time a great effort by Iran to transport advanced weaponry to Hezbollah in Lebanon. According to the foreign press, it was the Air Force that in recent days attacked the Syrian airports of Aleppo and Damascus, shutting them down, along with the large weapons transports on the way to Lebanon.

Air Force Commander Major Tomer Bar spoke about the events of the first day, saying: "There are many stories of courage by soldiers on the ground. The pilots killed many terrorists and helicopters brought fighters to the battlefield while under fire. We are proud of them and of the reservists who prove the strength of the IDF and the Air Force. We are investigating every day, and improving every day."

Regarding a ground invasion, Bar said: "We are preparing the theater for the most effective maneuvers possible, and are removing as many threats as possible from the ground and the air, in order to give the fighters operational freedom of action. At present we are focusing on the southern theater but are prepared at a high state of readiness to any development that could also occur in the north."

Operation Al-Aqsa Flood (/web/20240401050850/https://electronicintifada.net/tags/operation-al-aqsa-flood) Yasmin Porat (/web/20240401050850/https://electronicintifada.net/tags/yasmin-porat) 7 October (/web/20240401050850/https://electronicintifada.net/tags/7-october) friendly fire (/web/20240401050850/https://electronicintifada.net/tags/friendly-fire)

Comments

As a matter of fact, I haven (/web/20240401050850/https://electronicintifada.net/comment/300946#comment-300946)

(/web/20240401050850/https://electronicintifada.net/comment/300946#comment-300946)
tom hall replied on Sat, 11/11/2023 - 09:04

As a matter of fact, I haven't seen any footage demonstrating a reluctance to open fire until the target can be properly assessed. Some of this can be set down to confusion, but there's also an ingrained willingness to kill civilians, which we're seeing on a colossal scale in Gaza.

Israel's Sacred Terorism by Livia Rokach (/web/20240401050850/https://electronicintifada.net/comment/300951#comment-300951)

(/web/20240401050850/https://electronicintifada.net/comment/300951#comment-300951)
PSConee replied on Sat, 11/11/2023 - 21:58

In this book based on the diaries of Israel Prime Minister Moshe Sharrett, it has long been Israeli policy that it is acceptable for a few Israeli's to die in the cause of expanding Israeli territory, especially now that Gaza has huge gas reserves off their coastline. Anyone that has a clue about the suffering of Palestinians knows it has been longer than 75 years. The Palestinians first started protesting their treatment by Zionists in 1912. The Zionists thought it would be easy to remove the "indigenous population" and in the end the world will owe the Palestinians for keeping the Zionist entity within its current borders, because according to Holocaust Survivor Israel Shahak, their original goal was the Nile to the Euphrates, but that has been adapted to also include Security Zones - All the Middle East and beyond. The information has always been available but Americans have been socialized to believe only Israeli's, and they were given only one side of the story. In the 1980s I had a chance to meet students from all over the world, and their consistent pattern was to say they loved Americans, but Americans were ignorant of world affairs, and most interesting, that in their country, whether it was Japan, Spain, Brazil, Panama, Uganda, or France and even Germany, told me "In my country, we call you the United States of Israel". That is what led me to study this issue for 38 years. This post by Electric Intifada is painful but well-documented and fits the consistent pattern of Zionist behavior and its goals.

"Kill them all" (/web/20240401050850/https://electronicintifada.net/comment/300961#comment-300961)

(/web/20240401050850/https://electronicintifada.net/comment/300961#comment-300961)
Peter Purich replied on Sun, 11/12/2023 - 07:41

"Caedite eos. Novit enim Dominus qui sunt eius – Kill them all for the Lord knoweth them that are His" (2 Tim. ii. 19)

Clarity
(/web/20240401050850/https://electronicintifada.net/comment/300991#comment-300991)
(/web/20240401050850/https://electronicintifada.net/comment/300991#comment-300991)
Shayna V replied on Mon, 11/13/2023 - 06:18

Was there autopsies conducted to see how many people were killed by Israeli fire? Was it 200? Is that why they reduced death count by 200?